



ARLINGTON FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING

6/16/21 7:30 PM

Conducted by Remote Participation - Zoom Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Gibian	P	Padaria	p	Pokress	p	Kellar		McKenna	
Blundell	P	Wallach	p	Harmer	I	Tosti	p		
Ellis	p	Foskett	P	Deyst		Kocur			
Healy	P	Beck		Jones	p	Deshler	p		
Franclemont	P	Howard	p	LaCourt	p	Carman	p	Diggins	p

p Indicates present, I indicates late

VISITORS: Don Seltzer

1. INTRODUCTION: Foskett read the rules for the meeting as formulated by Town Counsel based on the Governor's authorization. An important rule is that all votes be by role call. Attendance was taken by roll call.

Note: A vote of "unanimous" means "unanimous vote by all present". The Chair votes only when there is a tie.

2. MINUTES: The minutes of 5/26/21 were approved unanimously.

3. Foskett announced that Adam Chapdelaine was selected for a job as administrator at Natick. He has not yet accepted the position, but is expected to enter negotiations with Natick. Foskett remarked on his many years of exemplary service to Arlington.

4. Jones announced that he plans to move the FinCom Sharepoint site to the Town's account. He will send an email telling the members how to sign in.

Working Group Reports

5. INFORMATION SYSTEMS: Jones is working on the transition to the Town's Share Point. LaCourt plans to coordinate FinCom spread sheets with the Town's records to simplify the generation of the FinCom report. She has several other ideas. Members suggested that the appearance of the FinCom Share Point could be improved.

6. POLICY AND PROCEDURES: Deshler expects to have a draft of a Manual in July. This document will capture the traditional ways the FinCom operates. It should help new members come up to speed more quickly. She asked each subcommittee to send her details of what we ask the department during the annual budget interviews. Tosti will loan his copy of the ATFC FinCom Primer to Liz for scanning.

7. COMUNICATIONS: Padaria walked the meeting through Ref 1, an outline of this group's plans. Seven FinCom members have been asked why they joined and why they have continued to serve. Franclemont listed several answers including members make a contribution to the Town, the service is worthwhile, it is a good way to learn how the Town operates. Padaria is planning some ACMI interviews to publicize the FinCom activities.

8. OPERATIONS RESEARCH: Tosti wants to avoid academic studies that simply go on a shelf. He is looking into holding Town elections entirely by mail. The group is coordinating with the Election Modernization Committee and the committee to study appointing rather than electing the Clerk. Members made many suggestions including environmental needs and cyber vulnerability.

9. BUDGET EXPENSE REPORTS: Dean has been thinking about this. He believes that the info provided the FinCom is outside the Town's system. He thinks the Town's system is OK. Should the FinCom change it's report? Dean plans to work with the Town Manager, Deputy Town Manager and the Comptroller to see if there is a better way.

10. THE KOCUR WHITE PAPER: George Kocur recently gathered a variety of information about Town & School finances, made various projections and asked pertinent questions. Charlie Foskett reorganized Kocur's material into 6 charts "for discussion" (Ref 2). If all these suggestions were followed, the Town & Schools would have a far longer and more complete financial plan than has existed in living memory. There was much discussion. One point made in various ways: such a plan must allow both for what the voters want and for what are they willing to spend.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM

Peter Howard  
6/17/21  
Revised 6/21/21

Ref 1 Communications Working Group Status  
Ref 2 Kocur White Paper

# Communications Working Group

Team Leader: Arif Padaria

Team Members: Alan J, Micahiah H, Mary Margaret F

## Town

Website

Notices

Reports to Town  
Meeting

Boards and  
Departments

## Public

Social Media

Arlington List

Press Releases

Other Related  
Institutions and panels

## Recruiting

Town Organizations

Precinct Meetings

PTA's

# STATUS UPDATE (as of 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021)

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## ➤ RECRUITING

- Michaiiah Healy on-board. **COMPLETED**

## ➤ EDUCATION

- George Kocur – Long Range Planning Discussion (presented at Feb 24 FinCom mtg)
  - To help bring this message to the town and provide education we have proposed to have George (with his permission) to do Q&A style video/interview with ACMI's James Milan.
  - Unfortunately, this task was

## ➤ GETTING TO KNOW FINCOM - Survey/Cheat Sheets/ Social Media / ACMI Videos

- Survey to current members – why we joined, reasons for staying on, etc.
  - This is being developed and will be passed around in the coming days. Will help us create a recruiting “cheat sheet”; and, also, bring to light some challenges that might prevent folks from joining.
  - MM – did this survey, one-on-one, and will report. **COMPLETED**
- Member ACMI Interviews – schedule with James Milan a series that allows the Town to get to know the FinCom Leadership and Members – personal and professional backgrounds, reasons for being on FinCom, work on FinCom, .... **In Planning**

# NEXT STEPS

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## ➤ RECRUITING

- As we have currently achieved our recruiting target, we are now focused on other marketing/outreach activities.
- **Suggestion: Needed:** On-boarding process (handbook, procedures). This is underway by Christine D + team.

## ➤ EDUCATION (aka ongoing FinCom development effort)

- **ARLINGTON FINANCE 101** - educational video series created in conjunction with ACMI. Curriculum needs to be discussed and finalized.
- **GETTING TO KNOW FINCOM** - mixed in with the education series - member ACMI interviews scheduled with James Milan a series of videos that allows the Town to get to know the FinCom Leadership and Members – personal and professional backgrounds, reasons for being on FinCom, work on FinCom, ....
- **SPECIAL TOPICS** - In addition to George K's LRP discussion/seminar, any other special topics to help educate town folks.
- **TOWN DAY EVENT** - (~15<sup>th</sup> Sep) – procuring stand-alone/shared table, setup (chairs, posters, etc.), food (cookies, pie), handouts, chackis (giant \$ bills, arlington coin 3d printed), and being manned (will need volunteers, scheduled).  
Announce Arlington Finance 101.
  - **IS THIS HAPPENING THIS YEAR? WHAT IS OUR BUDGET FOR THIS? WHO IS THE CONTACT FOR THE TOWN DAY COMMITTEE?**

## ➤ FinCom Internal Survey

- Survey to current members – why we joined, reasons for staying on, etc. This was undertaken by M2 and will be passed around in the coming days.

## ➤ FOR DISCUSSION: Our OWN WEBSITE

- Who will create the **Content** & be responsible for the day-to-day **Management of the Website**.

# Thank You

# George Kocur White Paper

- Presented for review and discussion, not action
- Organize into sections
  - Data Collection
  - Analysis
  - Planning
  - Budgeting
- Strategy – for each component who does what?
  - Finance Committee
  - Town and School Management
  - Other Boards: Capital Planning, School Committee, Select Board, Planning, etc.
  - How to approach this subject.....

# Data Collection

- School enrollment, costs over the last 10 years or more
- Capital Assets: Track assets and their growth. This impacts future capital budgets, which must maintain this capital stock
- Overhead rate for town and school employees.
- List of all special purpose funds held in the town
- What are the sources of free cash each year
- We should document the school portion of health insurance, pension, OPEB and other shared costs, so that we (the committee) understand them, and so we can understand how these costs will change as school staffing changes.



# Analysis

- Schools: a. Analyze change due to size of student body, versus unit cost per student. Break out enrollment and spending by special and general education b. Analyze issues with special education
- Town and Schools: Perform analysis of staffing evolution over time.
- Budget Information: It would be good for the budget spreadsheets to be structured so that their data can be put into a database with all employees, salaries and expenses by department, as well as all revenues, etc.
- Overhead Rates: . It appears these functions occur in many places. Identify all these positions and find their total cost. Can we consolidate or coordinate to make this more effective? Reorganization?

# Planning

- Scenario analysis for long range planning: Develop a spreadsheet to look at alternative scenarios. Possibly build on Sandy's, or Sandy's may be good enough.
- Capital Planning: . This level of assets, whatever it is, dictates capital and operating spending so that the assets are maintained in a good state or repair.
- Debt Exclusion Planning: With 10 schools, and perhaps 10 other significant town buildings, a significant rebuilding or renovation, assuming a 50-year interval, occurs somewhat regularly. Coordinate debt exclusions with overrides, as a policy/general framework. Create a master debt exclusion and override planning worksheet

# Budgeting

- School budget formula and limit: Do we need a spreadsheet to examine different school budget funding formulas for special versus general education, marginal expense increases per student, etc.
- Departments: a. Establish a process to assess staffing changes before filling a vacancy, instead of almost always filling vacancies in kind, have a written plan to transition to a more efficient organization over time
- Outside consultant to review budgets or process?

# Critical Issues

- What is the role of the Finance Committee?
  - Advisory?
  - Planning?
- How do the School Committee and Select Board integrate policy decisions and financial planning into long-term Town constraints?
- Should the Finance Committee integrate George's ideas into a working agenda over time?
- If so, how should the Finance Committee interact with other Boards and Committees with direct responsibility in certain spheres?